



# Bulletin of Popular Information

Volume 32

October, 1957

Number 10

## MORE ABOUT DWARF SHRUBS\*

As a class the dwarf shrubs are in greater demand than any other height group. And, being less numerous, the problem of finding among them subjects to meet the more exacting requirements of present day landscaping is often difficult to solve. While a number of the old stand-bys in "dwarfs" are still usable and easily procured the desire for something new or different has stimulated the search for additional subjects. With good results, too, if one is to judge by the promising findings almost every season reveals.

Anyone who has ever had a hand in the planning and planting of shrubbery groupings can appreciate fully the important part dwarf shrubs play in the creation of effective landscape compositions. For, without underestimating the value of the tall background materials and the medium sized fillers, it is an obvious fact that it is the low growing facer or edging shrubs which add the finishing touch to shrubbery plantings. In this role of facer the dwarfs provide a smooth transition between taller foliage masses and turf, hiding leggy stems, filling in bare spots and in general dressing up foregrounds with their trim outlines. Around today's low buildings the dwarf shrubs are particularly useful, as entrance accents, corner groupings or subjects for line plantings beneath windows or at the base of uninteresting wall surfaces. Dwarf shrubs serve as effective coverings for banks or slopes, too, or as softening materials for flanking steps or for planting above or beneath retaining walls. Planted by themselves they are also invaluable as accents, to emphasize architectural features, mark the intersection of walks and paths, and in the case of the flowering types to add interest to garden borders. Hedging is a further important use in which capacity they may function as edgings for outlining beds or to define walks and drives.

---

\*The term "Dwarf" as here used refers to shrubs normally remaining within the 1 to 3 ft. height category. Local climatic and growing conditions may result in some variance, however.

*Berberis Thunbergii argenteo marginata* "Kingsville Type",  
Kingsville Variegated Japanese Barberry

The gradual diminishing of the old prejudice against variegated plants permits greater advantage to be taken of their lively foliage characteristics in the planning of more colorful compositions. In this Kingsville Nursery selection of the Japanese Barberry three colors, green, yellow and pink are pleasingly blended in a foliage combination which is attractive not only in its summer aspect but in autumn as well. Further interest is provided by the salmon pink coloring of the new twigs. The bush is similar in habit to the type plant though of lower growth. In a partially shaded planting site better color may be maintained.

*Berberis Thunbergii atropurpurea nana*, "Crimson Pygmy",  
Crimson Pygmy Barberry

Since its addition to the Arboretum Collection in 1953 our high opinion of the Crimson Pygmy Barberry has never changed, each season leading to a greater appreciation of its uniform compactness and the individuality of its sparkling foliage color. Mature leaves are of a distinctive blood red hue with the new growth being several shades lighter. In shaded locations a bronze or purplish cast is more typical with autumn introducing the usual yellow, orange and purple tones characteristic of the genus. True to prediction the Crimson Pygmy Barberry has grown broader than high, 12 to 15 inch plants spreading to 2½ ft. or so.

*Cornus pumila* (syn. *mas nana*), Dwarf Dogwood

Irrespective of the disagreement among botanists as to its correct botanical classification this dwarf dogwood received in 1937 from the Berlin Botanic Garden is a plant which bears further watching. Lower growing, more compact and with better foliage than the Kelseydwarf Redosier Dogwood, it would seem to have merit. Its rate of growth has proved extremely slow, however, and its branches are inclined to be quite brittle. The medium sized leaves lack the lustre of those of *Cornus mas* and are more closely arranged on erect stems.

*Forsythia "Arnold Dwarf"* (*intermedia* x *japonica*),  
Arnold Dwarf Forsythia

Another interesting low shrub whose performance at the Arboretum has been satisfactory in every way is the Arnold Dwarf Goldenbell, a *Forsythia* hybrid introduced by the Arnold Arboretum in 1941. We like it particularly because it is a true dwarf, never growing taller than 18 inches or two feet, and retaining indefinitely its interesting mounded habit. Its purplish branches arch gracefully, often rooting at the tips. This feature suggests its ground cover possibilities. There is a pleasing distinction to the bright green foliage, too, with its conspicuously serrated margins. One fault of the original hybrid, its failure to produce flowers, has since been overcome by the discovery of a free blooming selection, one not yet generally available.





Early Alpine Currant, *Ribes alpinum pumilum*, dainty dwarf shrub for shade.



*Kerria japonica aureo variegata*, Yellowedge Japanese Kerria

Kerrias, old standbys among dwarf shrubs, have always been popular landscape subjects, grown for their bright green winter twig color, light foliage and cheery yellow May appearing flowers. An interesting variation which bears watching is this variegated selection received from the Grootendorst Nursery in Holland in 1950, a neat, broadly rounded bush not over 2½ ft. tall and 3 or 4 ft. wide. The creamy edging of its leaves lightens considerably the over all foliage effect without overly emphasizing the variegation. We consider it extremely decorative.

*Ligustrum species* "Mosnat Dwarf" type, Mosnat Dwarf Privet

Mention has been made in the Bulletin before of this promising seedling privet discovered 15 years ago by Mr. H. Roy Mosnat of Belle Plain, Iowa. Although similar to *Ligustrum vulgare nanum* in height, density and habit of growth, its foliage is more suggestive of Regal Privet in size, shape and coloring. That it will retain its dwarf character has been convincingly demonstrated, and thus far it has shown no indication of susceptibility to the blight responsible for the blacklisting of the Lodense Privet.

*Rhus aromatica* (syn. *canadensis*), Fragrant Sumac

The taller growing seedling strains of the Fragrant Sumac commonly offered by the trade give no indication whatsoever of the real worth of this very desirable member of the Sumac clan. Through the efforts of a local nurseryman, however, who has taken the trouble to locate and propagate the true prostrate type, it is now possible to take full advantage of the Fragrant Sumacs' special qualifications. Forty inches is the plant's maximum height, a typical bush forming a dense undulating foliage mass with procumbent branches extending right down to the ground line. The three parted aromatic foliage is fine textured and in autumn assumes a brilliance comparable to that of any other species.

*Ribes alpinum pumilum*, Early Alpine Currant

Not once since receiving the Early Alpine Currant from the L. Spath Nursery in Berlin in 1938 have we had reason to question the desirability of this gem among low shrubs. The epitome of daintiness—with fine textured foliage, a miniature version of that of the Alpine Currant, and jewel-like red fruit (July-August) diminutive in size (less than three eighths of an inch in diameter) and generously clustered along the stems, it stands apart as a bush of distinction. Eighteen or twenty four inches is the plant's maximum height, and although quite compact in habit there is a pleasing unevenness to its silhouette.

*Spiraea bumalda Walluffii*, Waluff Bumalda Spirea

Described as a very much improved "Anthony Waterer", the Walluff Bumalda Spirea is a little known variety worth noting. Its flowers are larger and deeper colored (vivid dark crimson) than those of the former and the narrow, sharply serrate leaves a good rich green. Of compact



growth, the bush stays well within the dwarf height limitation. Very floriferous even while still small. Arboretum plants were obtained from the T. Hilling Nursery in Surrey.

*Spiraea Thunbergii compacta*, Dwarf Thunberg Spirea

In this new form of the Thunberg Spirea imported from the Grootendorst Nursery in Boskoop, Holland the fine textured light green foliage characteristic of the type plant is combined with a dwarf, more compact habit of growth. Whether or not it will prove hardier than the species itself remains to be seen, but if it does its feathery appearance and early white flowers should find a ready welcome. Good drainage and full sun are recommended for it.

*Stephanandra incisa*, Cutleaf Stephanandra

Perfect drainage is also an important prerequisite to the successful establishment of the dainty Cutleaf Stephanandra, a near relative of the Spireas originating in Korea and Japan. And, although reaching a height of 4 to 8 ft. at Kew, where it was first introduced in 1872 by way of St. Petersburg, we have found it to be a true dwarf staying within the 3 ft. maximum. Of the Stephanandra's several interesting features we like it especially for its gracefully widespreading habit and for the beauty of its finely and deeply incised small leaves. They are not very large, averaging slightly over an inch or so in length and borne alternately on conspicuous red zig-zag branches whose coloring changes to brown in winter. As an autumn foliage color contributor the Stephanandra is also noteworthy, belonging in the reddish purple to purple classification. Early October usually finds it at its best. There is little to be said for the inconspicuous greenish white June borne flowers or for the dry capsular fruits. To minimize the possibility of die-back during severe winters a light sandy soil in full sun is recommended.

*Symphoricarpos chenaulti* Hancock, Hancock Prostrate Coralberry

To those to whom the name *Symphoricarpos* is synonymous with Indian Currant or Buckbrush the introduction of a new variety may not arouse too much enthusiasm. After having observed the Hancock Prostrate Coralberry for two growing seasons, however, it is our opinion that it is unquestionably a shrub with a future. Of a size (to 2 ft.) always in demand and forming a neat mat of fine textured foliage, it would seem to be an ideal ground cover subject for either sun or part shade. There is a pleasing sweep to its curving branches and while not conspicuous in flower its rose pink fruit is not without interest.

E. L. Kammerer

---

Trustees: Sterling Morton, Chairman; Clayton J. Adams; Edward H. Baker, Jr.; Laurence A. Carton; Garfield King; Wirt Morton; Daniel Peterkin, Jr.; Suzette Morton Zurcher; Victor K. Zurcher

Staff: Clarence E. Godshalk, Director; E. Lowell Kammerer, Curator of Collections; Mrs. Raymond Watts, Naturalist; Anthony Tyznik, Asst. to the Director; Webster R. Crowley, Jr., Research Technician; Gordon Scott, Horticulturist; Walter E. Eickhorst, Asst. Curator of Collections; Roy M. Nordine, Propagator; Raymond Schulenberg, Asst. Propagator

Published monthly by The Morton Arboretum, Lisle, Ill. Subscription \$1.00 a year; single copies 10c; double copies 20c